

Media Release

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More bulk billing won't improve rural health outcomes

More bulk billing will place additional strain on a health workforce that is already stretched beyond breaking point in rural, regional and remote Australia.

The [ALP](#) and [Liberal Party](#) recently announced an increase to bulk billing but this will not improve rural health outcomes, said Dr Arn Sprogis, Chair of the Tuross Head Progress Association's (THPA) Health Subcommittee.

"The major parties are united in funding an increase to bulk billing. The TPHA welcome this initiative but it doesn't go far enough or address maldistribution of Australia's healthcare workforce," Dr Sprogis said.

"This is a grab for city votes that comes at the expense of rural communities. It will exacerbate delays many patients already face in accessing GPs, nurses and primary care in the Far South Coast."

"While it is an improvement, it will not deliver on the TPHA's demand of 100 per cent no cost for GP and primary care services for everyone in rural areas," Dr Sprogis said.

The Australian Government Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler, has publicly acknowledged the unique challenges and disparities rural and remote communities face when accessing healthcare, including attracting and retaining health professionals to provide local primary care services.

[In his response to the National Rural Health Alliance's petition to the House of Representatives calling for better healthcare for rural Australians](#), Minister Butler went on to state traditional models of GP service delivery may not work in all communities and that the primary issue for the rural health workforce is one of equitable distribution rather than undersupply.

"The Federal Health Minister has admitted that the bulk of the increase in GP numbers has occurred in major capital cities and metropolitan areas. Expanding bulk billing will only attract more medical professionals to city locations. Neither of the major parties have outlined how and when they will improve the health workforce's capacity, quality and distribution in rural, regional and remote areas," Dr Sprogis said.

"Australians living in rural communities should be able to access urgent care on the same day and routine care within two days. Delays in accessing essential care are putting the lives of people in our region at risk."

The TPHA calls on individuals and community organisations to join their campaign for fair and equitable access to healthcare for the Far South Coast at www.thpa.com.au/health-2025. The TPHA is also calling on people to send their stories about delayed access to medical professionals to mediathpa@gmail.com